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Dear Mr. Majority Leader:

The American people want and need the protection of a Patients' Bill of Rights. As more and more families face unreasonable barriers to getting necessary health care approved from health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and other health insurance plans, it is clear that legislative action is needed. Public opinion surveys repeatedly show that the public's desire for managed care consumer protections is both wide and deep.

It is more than half a year since the President's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry proposed, virtually unanimously, the adoption of a Bill of Rights. For many months it has been clear that strong support exists for the enactment of a genuine Patients' Bill of Rights. Two bills—the Patients' Bill of Rights Act (S. 1890) and the Patients' Access to Responsible Care Act (S.644)—have such support and demonstrate that many members are in favor of bipartisan patient protection legislation.

It is therefore both troubling and puzzling that there has been a delay in consideration of this legislation. We believe that it is wrong to obstruct congressional consideration of genuine patient protection legislation. Your colleagues want such legislation. America's families need it. And it is a violation of fundamental fairness, and a disservice to families seeking health care, for you to block a vote on this important legislation.

We hope that you will lend your support to efforts to enact genuine managed care patient protection legislation—not a watered-down version and not one that is combined with "poison pills." We urge you to schedule quickly a full and fair debate on such legislation. Protecting America's families should be your number one priority. We urge you to act now.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Mitchem
Legislative Counsel

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Director of Health Policy Analysis